(b) if so, the details and the objectives of the scheme;

(c) whether this scheme has been implemented in every district in all the States;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons for excluding certain districts from the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (e) A Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS) covering all the farmers availing crop loans from rural financial institutions i.e. Cooperative Credit Structure, Regional Rural Banks and Commercial Banks, for growing wheat, paddy, millets (including maize), oilseeds and pulses has been under implementation in the country since 1985. The objectives of CCIS are to provide financial support in the event of crop failure due to natural calamities such as droughts, floods etc. and to restore the credit-eligibility of the farmers. It is voluntary for the States to opt for implementation of this scheme. The choice of districts is also open to the States and depends upon the need for the scheme, availability of yield data and capability of the State to conduct the stipulated number of crop cutting experiments. In Rabi 1997-98 season, the scheme was under implementation in 15 States and 2 Union Territories.

Signing of MoU with Myanmar

138. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have signed any Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Myanmar for cooperation in the area of agriculture and allied sector; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the areas of agriculture and allied sectors between the Government of India and the Government of Myanmar was signed on 25th April, 1998 in Yangon.

(b) The important details of the MoOU, interalia, are the following:—

(1) Both the parties shall engage in joint activities in the areas of crop sciences, research agricultural extension, sericulture, horticulture, jute, sugarcane, arid zone agriculture, cooperative farming, agricultural mechanization, agricultural statistics, georgraphic information system (GIS), fertilizer and pesticides use and agricultural Joint ventures, agro based industries, such as, sugar, jute, cotton, tea processing industries, exchange of scientific information and germplasm, rainfed watershed development and water resources development including irrigation.

(2) The Parties shall also promote development of cooperation in agricultural science and technology, exchange of delegation and experts and also exchange of trainees in order to acquaint themselves of the development in the areas indicated earlier.

(3) Cooperation would also be promoted within the frame-work of the joint activities through biennial work plans drawn up by mutual agreement.

(4) There is a provision of Joint Working Group to be formed comprising equal number of members from each of the parties to manitor the activities carried out in fulfilment of this MoU. The Working Group shall hold its meeting alternately in India and in Myanmar once in every two years.

(5) As per the financial provisions of the MoU, the sending party shall bear the cost of international air travel and the receiving party shall

provide local hospitality for the persons deputed under the Work Plan.

(6) The MoU shall enter into force on the date of its signing and shall remain valid for a period of five years and shall automatically be renewed for the subsequent period of five years unless either party notifies the other in writing, six months before the expiration of the validity period, of its intention to terminate it. However, the expiry and termination of the MoU shall not prejudice the completion of projects already in progress.

Enquiry into suicides by Farmers

139. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that hundreds of farmers have committed suicides during the last six months in various parts of the country;

(b) if so, the details of such suicidal deaths, State-wise, during the last six months;

(c) whether Government have conducted any official survey/enquiry regarding the reasons behind such suicides; if so, the details of enquiry so conducted indicating the recommendations/remedial measures suggested; and

(d) whether Government have paid any compensation to the family of the deceased farmers; if so, the details thereof State-wise and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra have reported total suicidal deaths as 236, 29 and 51, respectively. There has been no reports of suicidal deaths from other States.

(c) and (d) It is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to provide relief to the people affected by natural calamities. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing additional resources in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commissions appointed from time to time. In addition to the annual allocation under Calamity Relief Fund, additional assistance is provided, if any, from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR), in the event of a calamity of rare severity. An additional assistance of Rs. 12.00 crore was released to the Government of Andhra Pradesh during 1997-98 from the NFCR in the wake of damage to crops, mainly cotton, due to pest attack. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has sanctioned ex-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased while the Government of Karnataka has sanctioned ex-gratia of Rs. 1.00 lakh each in 13 suicide cases and the Government of Maharashtra has paid Rs. 1.00 lakh per family in 12 suicide cases having direct linkage with crop loss/ indebtedness and Rs. 50,000/- per family in 7 cases having some linkage with crop loss. In addition, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has announced several package measures of relielf to the affected farming families and the Government of Karnataka has released Rs. 4.00 crore as one-time assistance in the form of input subsidy to the affected small and marginal farmers.

News Caption 'Panic Grips Farmers as virus wipes out Cotton Crop'

140. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN:
DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned 'Panic grips farmers as virus wipes out cotton crop' published in the Observer Business and Politics, dated the 15th October, 1997;

(b) if so, the details and facts thereon;

(c) whether India being an exporter of cotton shall have to import it;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and